

Telling the Truth after Postmodernism¹

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ABSTRACT: *The concerns of this paper come from an attempt to develop sociological inquiry from women's standpoint and to create a sociology for people. It is a project that must rely on the possibility of "telling the truth." The poststructuralist/postmodernist critique of representation and reference creates a fundamental problem for this project. It challenges the very possibility of a sociology committed to inquiry into the actualities of the social as people live them.*

The poststructuralist/postmodernist critique of the unitary subject of modernity is central. It is argued that the subject and subject-object relations are inescapably in and of discourse and language. Both subject and object are discursively constituted and there is no beyond to which reference can be made in establishing the truth of statements. Rather subjects are constituted only in discourse and are fragmented, multiple, diverse. This paper argues that, though the unitary subject is rejected, an individuated subject survives though multiplied and that a central failure of poststructuralism/postmodernism is to come to grips with the social as actual socially organized practices.

Using the theories of George Herbert Mead and Mikhail Bakhtin, the paper goes on to offer an alternative understanding of referring and "telling the truth." Observations of sequences in which people are identifying an object for one another are described to demonstrate the radically and ineluctably social character of the process. The argument is then extrapolated with further examples to offer an alternative account of referring. A description of using a street map in an actual context of "finding our way" exemplifies how a science might be inserted into a local practice. Telling the truth, it is argued, is always and only in just such actual sequences of dialogue among people directly present to one another or indirectly present in the texts they have produced. My own and others' observations are used to reconceptualize "referring" in general as integral to a social act of finding and recognizing an object as a local performance. In conclusion, I suggest that the example of a map offers to sociology a model that does not displace and subordinate people's experience but can be used by them to expand their knowledge beyond it.

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INTRODUCTION

The consciousness raising practices of the early days of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s relied on a telling of women's experiences. The project of a sociology developed from women's standpoint and for rather than of or about people is modelled on this method. It is not, however, exclusively about or for women. Women's standpoint means beginning in the actualities of people's lives as they experience them and a sociology for people developed from this *point d'appui* orients to the social as it organizes people's everyday/everynight living. It proposes to create a knowledge of the social grounded in people's experience of their own lives. It does not treat experience as knowledge, but as a place to begin inquiry. Speaking from experience speaks from the only site of consciousness—in an individual's own living, and hence as it is, and must be, embedded and active in social relations and organization that are not contained in what people can speak of directly.

Experience, as spoken, is always social and always bears its social organization. A sociology for people proposes to explore from experience but beyond it, beginning in the living as people can speak of it rather than in the pre-givens of theoretically-designed discourse. Discourse itself, and other dimensions of the objectified organization of corporations, government, professions, etc. are themselves also understood as being "in the living" and hence investigatable as people's actual practices.² The object of sociological inquiry is not order nor action as such, but the ongoing coordinating or concerting of actual people's activities.³ Consciousness, subjectivity, the subject, are hence always embedded, active, and constituted in, the concerting of people's activities with each other; concepts, theories, ideas, and other terms identifying operations of thought are themselves activities or practices and enter into the coordination of action. This is a social ontology not of meaning but of a concerting of activities that actually happens. Hence the social must be conceived as an ongoing process (cf. Garfinkel 1967, 1972), in time and in actual local sites of people's bodily existence, even when the coordination may be of large-scale organization or of social relations implicating multiplicities such as those theorized by Marx.

A sociology beginning in people's everyday/everynight experience takes for granted that experience is as various as people are. It does not seek to supersede this variety by constructing a version that overrides all others. Differences in experience arise in a matrix of everyday/everynight activities and how they are entered into and coordinated with others' activities. The project is to explore concerting and co-ordering and hence the organization and relations that generate the varieties of lived experience.

As a *project of inquiry rather than of theory*, it must rely on the possibility that truth can be told in the following very ordinary sense: that when people disagree about statements made about the world, accuracy or truth is not decided on the basis of "authority" but on the basis of referring back, in principle at least, to an original state of affairs, extraneous to the account of it. In a sense, it wants an account of knowledge which takes for granted that people's experiences are various and that a social theory of knowledge will grasp it as a definite mode of coordinating activities among people.

The old theory/practice split is not reenacted. Rather the knowing subject is located in a lived world in which both theory and practice go on, in which theory is itself a practice and

in time, and in which the divide between the two can itself be brought under examination. The entry into text-mediated discourse and the relations of text-mediated discourse are themselves actual as activities and the ordering of activities. They happen. Always in the time in which they occurred and during which they perdured. Concepts, beliefs, ideas, knowledge, and so on (what Marxists know as consciousness) are included in this ontology. They are practices, they happen, they are ongoing, and they are integral to the concerting and coordinating of people's activities.

This sociology is of the same lived world of which it writes; it aims at producing a knowledge of that world which is itself in and of the social. It is committed to inquiry and investigation, to *finding out* "how things are put together," and hence to producing knowledge that represents the social as it is. Clearly, then, it must find some alternative to post-structuralism/postmodernism's⁴ rejection of the possibility of referring to what exists beyond discourse and independently of discourse's positing. That critique has addressed and been addressed primarily in the social sciences. In anthropology it has led to a deep questioning of the very project of ethnography; in sociology the very possibility of a knowledge of society or the social is put in question.⁵

The project of a sociology from women's standpoint, as it is taken up here, joins with poststructuralism/postmodernism in rejecting sociologies requiring an archimedian point, objectifying as authoritative a unitary consciousness grounded in and reproducing existing relations of power. It also rejects the totalizing of a theory that subdues all forms of consciousness to its own dominating system of interpretation. However, I argue here that the poststructuralism/postmodernism critique of theories of language, meaning, reference and representation has "slipped into the form" of the theories it criticizes,⁶ in replicating obscurely the very universalized subject of knowledge it has repudiated. It has rejected the unitary subject of modernity only to multiply it as subjects constituted in multiple and fragmented discourses. Furthermore, the function of consciousness is transferred from the subject to language or discourse reinforcing the traditional separation of the bases of consciousness from the local historical activities of people's everyday lives.

Using theoretical resources drawn from George Herbert Mead (1938, 1947), Valentin N. Volosinov (1973), and Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1981, 1986), this paper puts forward an alternative and social theory of knowledge which begins in a world of activity, the doings of actual people. The subject/knower of inquiry is not a transcendent subject but situated in the actualities of her own living, in relations with others as they are. Hence theory must formulate referring, representing, inquiry, and discovery as the locally organized social practices of actual people. Mead's and Volosinov/Bakhtin's theories locate self and language in the social processes of people's everyday activities. Mead theorizes a fully social self arising in and organizing the social act; he conceives of the meaning of symbolic communication, indeed its symbolic character, as a property of ongoing social interaction. Volosinov/Bakhtin complement Mead. They are equally decisive in rejecting conceptions of language and ideology as systems independent of the local production of language and meaning. Bakhtin presents an essentially dialogic conception of meaning and of language not as an autonomous system, but as continually remade in settings of its use. Their theory and analysis contribute what is so strikingly absent in Mead, namely an account of language as

meaning given determination prior to any particular local interaction and hence as playing a powerful role in the local organization of the social. I draw on both these lines of thinking and analysis to develop an account of "referring" or "representing," indeed knowledge, as *essentially* social and as an organization of social action *among participating subjects* rather than as a function, such as perception or cognition or experience, of the consciousness of an individuated subject.

THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST/POSTMODERNIST ALTERNATIVE

Established sociology has taken for granted the representationality of the categories of its discourse, and that they can mean what they say. It has taken for granted the possibility of producing objective accounts of society and of the social determinants of people's behaviour. The technical sophistication of its methodologies, particularly quantitative methodologies, have been preoccupied precisely with producing accounts and explanations that are both "unbiased" and veridical. The methodologies of sociology constitute an Archimedean position from which the object of knowledge can be displayed uncontaminated by the positions and interests of sociology's practitioners. The developing intellectual debates that can be loosely described as poststructuralism/postmodernism are united in denying the validity of such a transcendental standpoint. Poststructuralism and postmodernism remove the foundations of this project in removing the primacy of the subject-object relationship, insisting that both are effects of discourse. They posit language and discourse as having properties and dynamics independent of people's intentions to mean and deny that categories and concepts can refer to and represent a reality beyond them, indeed that it is meaningful to speak of a reality which is not in language. They reject the notion that there can be an overriding truth to which alternative views, theories, and versions of the world must be subordinated. Charles Lemert (1994) formulates the challenge for sociology thus:

In a world where reality is constituted in and by means of texts, everything is theoretical in some sense, because everything is discursive and, in situations where this is the case, what other reality is there? (Lemert 1994, p. 279)

Lemert follows Roland Barthes's (1979) distinction between "work" and "text." A work is the book or paper held in the hand; "text" is "held in language" (Barthes 1979, p. 75) and in an intertextual field.⁷ Subject and object and the subject-object relation disappear. To be a subject is conditional on entry to discourse; to enter discourse is to forgo the very possibility of knowing the object:

. . . with entry into the symbolic order, our immersion in the immediacy of the real is forever lost; we are forced to assume an irreducible loss; the word entails the (symbolic) murder of the thing, etc. (Zizek 1993, p. 92)

Writing and interpreting texts are practices of and in the intertextual field. Language or discourse, not the objects or events, determine representation. There can be, therefore, no reality posited beyond the text with reference to which meaning can be stabilized among different subjects. The notion of referring to or representing in the text a reality beyond it

which authorizes theory or explanation is rejected. “[Truth] cannot be the representation or mirror of an external or universal substance (‘presence’) or subject because none exists” (Flax 1990, p. 200).

All criteria for distinguishing between truth and falsehood, for evaluating theory, require that one choose between categories, or they expect one to establish a hierarchy of values that designates some as good and others as bad. Postmodernists reject such distinctions and rather emphasize multiple realities and the view that no single interpretation of any phenomenon can be claimed superior to any other. (Rosenau 1992, p. 80)

The intersection of knowledge and power arises as the claim to truth overpowers alternative and subjugated knowledges (Foucault 1980). Postmodernism displaces totalizing claims to truth with notions such as Jean-François Lyotard’s (1984) conception of society as a multiplicity of language games, each with its rules and practices, no one of which can declare its primacy over others. In Jane Flax’s terms:

Truth for postmodernists is an effect of discourse. Each discourse has its own distinctive set of rules or procedures that govern the production of what is to count as a meaningful or truthful statement. Each discourse or “discursive formation” is simultaneously enabling and limiting. The rules of a discourse enable us to make certain sorts of statements and to make truth claims, but the same rules force us to remain within the system and to make only those statements that conform to these rules. A discourse as a whole cannot be true or false because truth is always contextual and rule dependent. Discourses are local, heterogeneous, and often incommensurable. No discourse-independent or transcendental rules exist that could govern all discourses or a choice between them. Truth claims are in principle “undecidable” outside of or between discourses. This does not mean that there is no truth but rather that truth is discourse dependent. Truth claims can be made by those who accept the rules of a discourse or who are willing to bridge across several. However, there is no trump available which we can rely on to solve all disputes. Prior agreement on rules, not the compelling power of objective truth, makes conflict resolution possible. (Flax 1992, p. 452)⁸

As social scientists, therefore, we cannot create a unified disciplinary subject of a unified system of knowledge, but must reconcile ourselves to multiple narratives revealing varied and many-sided versions of the world from multiple and fragmented discursively constituted positions. Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson (1994), writing for feminism, propose a “postmodern-feminist theory” which

. . . would be pragmatic and fallibilistic. It would tailor its methods and categories to the specific task at hand, using multiple categories when appropriate and foreswearing the metaphysical comfort of a single “feminist method” or “feminist epistemology.” In short, this theory would look more like a tapestry composed of threads of many different hues than one woven in a single colour. (Fraser and Nicholson 1994, p. 258)⁹

Thus poststructuralism/postmodernism challenges the very project on which sociological theory had been based, namely its “claim to speak the Truth, to be an epistemically privileged discourse” (Seidman 1994, p. 119). The project of knowledge for sociology has to be abandoned in favour of regional social, rather than sociological, theorizing “with a moral intent” (Seidman 1994, pp. 126-127).¹⁰

Feminism's recognition of the imbrication of knowledge, authority, and masculine hegemony has rejoiced theoretically in the critical possibilities offered by postmodernism. It has been argued that the conception of a unitary and universalized subject is corrupted by a desire for dominance (Flax 1992) and that claims to universality cannot be sustained against their demonstrable ethnocentricity or class and gender positioning. Even the authority claimed for experience by many in the women's movement is denied. "Experience," interpreted as a function of the modernist unitary subject, cannot provide a direct and uncontaminated access to reality since it is already discursively determined. For feminism and for the sciences of the social, the project of "representing" the object in discourse is no longer viable for there is no object that is not already posited discursively.

To posit a materiality outside of language is still to posit that materiality, and the materiality so posited will retain that positing in its constitutive condition. (Butler 1994, pp. 67-68; see also Laclau and Mouffe 1985)

The circularity of Butler's formulation repudiates the very possibility of *discovering what is not already posited*. The validity of inquiry as a project is removed.

The individuated subject's perception giving unmediated access to reality has been foundational to traditional philosophical epistemologies. Francis Bacon (1900) formulated this as a knowledge wholly transparent to its object. Such epistemologies assume that language enters only at the point of expressing what has been perceived. Philosophical theorists of language, Frege, for example (Dummett 1981), have indeed sought to construct rules to remedy the sloppy fictions of which ordinary language is capable by according the privilege of determining truth to the relation between reference and object. Poststructuralists extrapolated from Saussure's structuralist theory of signs and signification to put such theories of meaning in question.

Saussure (1959) starts from the discipline of linguistics as it had developed in the late 19th century. Though his theory is profoundly original, it also takes for granted the incisive move that had already been made, namely the treatment of language as an object of systematic study independent of its local occurrences in talk and text and hence that language and meaning can be examined independently of local historical contexts of utterance. Saussure's relative neglect of *parole* or utterance as the focus of observation and theory in favour of language as a system of signs seals off his investigation of language from the ongoing ordinary practices of talk among people. Meaning is treated as a determinate property that signs carry around with them, an assumption essential to the idea that signifier-signified relations exist independently of actual contexts of speaking-hearing and reading-writing. Since people's actual practices of talk or writing/reading are already suppressed discursively, their social character is also already cut away.

Building on this theoretical basis, poststructuralist/postmodernist critique insists on a dynamic internal to discourse or language determining meaning beyond intentions seeking expression in a particular utterance. Hence language or discourse cannot represent the object purely and directly because both are systems of meaning determined internally in processes of differentiation¹¹ independent of the object represented. When we speak and write, a discourse speaks through us. We speak/write/image only within its play of signification. The sign's capacity to signify is an effect of the play of difference within language

or discourse. Since experience or perception are always mediated discursively and are never pure themselves, claims to knowledge grounded in them must be discounted. If meaning is determined internally to the system of signs itself, how can it be wholly transparent to the object?

In an analogous fashion, discourse is determined intertextually and beyond the intention of individual speakers or writers. Hence there can be no one-on-one correspondence between a category and the object it designates; every such category is determined by the opposing and determining complement from which it is differentiated and carries with it traces of what it is not. Any category, any term, draws into the text or talk as a tacit subtext the other that defines it in difference. There is no discrete category that does not contain internally the other from which it is differentiated. So there is no way in which concept or category can function representationally, no exact and reproduceable correspondence between term and object. We must always mean more and other than we mean to say/write. Precision of reference—indeed, the very possibility of consistent, reproduceable reference—is precluded. Where there is no possibility of inquiry or reference to the beyond-the-text, even a denotational language-game can only circle around itself. The object of inquiry cannot be pushy, cannot surprise those who think they are exploring it, cannot be a common point of reference in deciding who is right in arguments about what is.

Hence theorizing is substituted for, even displaces, inquiry. There is nothing against which the text can be evaluated except that text again or another text. There is no outside to go to, no beyond-the-text to check the text against. Theory retreats into interpretation (Alexander 1995;¹² Seidman 1992, 1994); its discursive field is capable of indefinite expansion once the rules of evidence and argument that constrain inquiry are obviated. Ann Game's deconstructive sociology insists that her analyses of the "social texts" of Australia's Bondi Beach, "make no claims to being the best or correct reading; on the contrary, one of the central concerns here is to develop a form of analysis that invites further rewritings" (Game 1991, p. 8). Discourse as a field of study is an endless resource without destination or conclusion. Within this frame, sociology has no ground for inquiry that could claim to discover a world inclusive of and exceeding textuality and discourse in which actual people are active and in which the social we create among us actually happens. *This* social, the one that inquiry might posit as its object, disappears. The object of knowledge is already there; it has already been posited, already discursively constituted. There can be no discovery. Sociological discourse, feminist discourse too, become open-ended intertextual territories which theory builds as it goes along.

CRITIQUE

Poststructuralism/postmodernism rejects the unitary subject which is presupposed in the Enlightenment's project of rational objectivity. The latter presupposes a subject who can know the world independently of the language or discourse in which it is written of and can therefore test discourse against it. The Enlightenment's conception of the individuated subject of reason and self-reflection as it was formulated at its foundational moment by Descartes has been elegantly stated by Rodolphe Gasché.¹³

By lifting the ego out of its immediate entanglement in the world and by thematizing the subject of thought itself, Descartes establishes the apodictic certainty of self as a result of the clarity and distinctness with which it perceives itself. Through self-reflection, the self—the ego, the subject—is put on its own feet, set free from all unmediate relation to being. In giving priority to the human being's determination as a thinking being, self-reflection marks the human being's rise to the rank of a subject. (Gasché 1986, p. 14)

The unitary subject transcends its bodily sites of being and hence also its historical situation. It is the foundation of the Enlightenment's project of knowledge. Knowledge of logical and mathematical truths is complemented by knowledge that relies on perception. The endemic and perhaps unsolvable problems of the relation between Descartes's subject, the *ego cogitans*, and the object known or sought, have been the generating dynamic of western philosophy since Immanuel Kant published his *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is projected even, as Rodolphe Gasché (1986) demonstrates, into the work of Jacques Derrida. In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, we can already find the convention of transposing modes of consciousness of the individuated subject into nominalized functions such as "cognition," "intuition," "understanding," "sense," and so on. The problematic of reason is set out in a way that conceals a shift from activities of the individual subject to universalized functions. Stylistic conventions, for example "man" as subject (found in the quotation from Heidegger below),¹⁴ raise the individuated subject to the level of the universal.

The Enlightenment's project of knowledge was also one of the rational control of both natural and social worlds. In his lectures on Nietzsche, Heidegger wrote:

Western history has now begun to enter into the completion of that period we call the *modern*, and which is defined by the fact that man becomes the measure and the center of beings. Man is what lies at the bottom of all beings; that is, in modern terms, at the bottom of all objectification and representability. (quoted by Kolb 1986, p. 137)

The individuated subject of the Enlightenment which was foundational to concepts of freedom from the authority of the church becomes by an ironic turn inextricably itself identified with authority and power.

According to Lyotard, the Enlightenment goals of knowledge and liberation of the distanced subject are being outmoded by new knowledge and technology, which more and more reveal, and create, a world where we must make our way with neither fixed rules nor the comforting feeling of mastery over our tools and our language. (Kolb 1986, p. 257)

Poststructuralist and postmodernist theorists have raised a fundamental challenge to this conception of the unitary subject and its associated claims to authority. Michel Foucault (1970, 1972, 1981) insisted that the history of discourse cannot be read off from the intentions of participating subjects. Rather discourse is an order of concepts, schemata, constituted objects, systems of representation, and so forth, with its own internal structure and relations which impose themselves on subjects as the medium of their thinking. Perhaps influenced by the thinking of Louis Althusser, he comes to represent subjects as defined within political processes of power which at once constitute and subdue them (Foucault 1979, 1980). Lyotard (1984) argues that the postmodern condition undermines the unitary subject replacing it with a multiplicity of subject positions fragmented among multiple lan-

guage games, lacking an overriding philosophical principle that could assign primacy to any one. Sandra Harding (1986), offering a feminist critique of scientific epistemologies, argues for a multiplication of knowledges corresponding to subjects situated variously in relation to gender, race, and class. Judith Butler (1990, p. 2) criticizes the unitary concept of woman as subject which replicates in the women's movement "the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought." Gender identities, she argues, are not "always constituted coherently . . . because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities" (Butler 1990, p. 3).

While this critique dispenses with the unitary subject of what Heidegger, in the passage cited above, called "the modern," it carries forward as a foundational structure, the idea of an individuated subject. In challenging Husserl's conceptions of "solitary mental life" and of "interior monologue" as an unmediated self-presence of meaning, Derrida (1973) deploys Saussure's theory of language in arguing that self, presence, and meaning are secondary to language and its structuring of signification. His critique, and his subsequent theoretical work, do not, however, displace the individuated subject and the problematic of knowledge that it generates.¹⁵ Lacan's subject is an individuated consciousness permanently in exile from reality. Though there are mother and father, these are ideal rather than actual people. Neither are subjects for themselves; neither speak back. There is no social *process*; no interrelating; no context; no history.¹⁶ The subject travels his solitary path among parents who are no more than mythologized functions in the oedipal story (Lacan 1977; Mitchell and Rose 1982; Grosz 1990, pp. 50-81), the father a name and the mother voiceless. There is no interplay.¹⁷ "The subject is born insofar as the signifier emerges in the field of the other" (Lacan 1977, p. 199). The individuated subject of his formulation echoes Descartes's *cogito* reconstructed for Lacan's own theory as, in Renata Salecl's (1994, p. 115) vivid phrase, a "substanceless point of self-reflection."¹⁸ The intervention of the symbolic order constitutes the (individuated) subject at the same time as it bars him forever from unmediated access to reality.

The feminist critique also remains committed to the individuated subject. True she is now "an effect of discourse" (Flax 1990); or is distributed among different social categories of oppression such as gender, race, and class (Harding 1986); or is multiplied in correspondence with the multiplicities of discourses; or, as identity, is fragmented across these multiple intersecting discourses; or, as Lacan's subject, is divided like a layer cake between the subject who enunciates and the subject who is the speaker. Though postmodernism rejects the unitary subject, knowing and knowledge remain functions of an individuated consciousness. Throughout, the individuation of the subject is preserved, whether as fragmented, multiplied, layered, or various.

Yet the social returns in odd ways. Presumably finding that language and discourse are somehow, at a certain point, inadequate, the practitioners of poststructuralism/postmodernism reintroduce the social, using ad hoc notions of social context, history, institutions, and so on. Judith Butler (1994) deploys J. L. Austin's (1962) concept of "performative" to supply the missing "social" and to return us within discourse to a world of activity that the poststructuralist/postmodernist theorizing of discourse does not encompass. "Performative" was a conception introduced by Austin in discovering for philosophy utterances that

are not constative, that is, factual statements. He uses as examples formulaic statements such as the "I do" that is part of the Anglican wedding ceremony or the formula used at the ceremonial launching of a ship. These are utterances that "perform" an act rather than make a statement. But for Austin, and also for Butler, performatives proceed from the individuated subject. Careful to avoid attributing anything to the individual actor, Butler adopts a device much like those sociology has used for similar reasons—the verb is nominalized to create an abstraction. "Perform" via Austin's gerund becomes "performativity."

Performatives, Butler (1994, p. 134) argues, are the "effects" of language conventions. Language conventions are sedimented historically. They cannot be attributed to individual intentions.¹⁹ The individuated consciousness is structurally displaced by language to reappear as a subject who is an effect of language or discourse; "performativity" substitutes for intention as the originator of action. It also pre-empts any notion of the social—a striking effect when we consider that Austin and Butler use examples such as marriage. In effect the notion of performative reduces what can only be accomplished by people together in concerted action to the speech act of an individual. For Austin, "I promise" promises and "I do" marries. In order to overcome the difficulties this creates, Austin introduces two more concepts: the notion of the illocutionary force of a speech act—what makes a particular form of words a promise or an invitation; and its perlocutionary force or what is getting done by the illocutionary force of the speech act—a marriage, the organization of a social event, etc. Through such devices Austin and Butler seek to overcome the inhibitions created by the traditional commitment of philosophy to the individuated consciousness. "Effects," "effectivity," "force," "power," or "linguistic conventions," are added to "performativity" or to language displacing, even repressing, the social.

For a performative to work, it must draw upon and recite a set of linguistic conventions which have traditionally worked to bind or engage certain kinds of effects. The force or effectivity of a performative will be derived from its capacity to draw on and reencode the historicity of those conventions in a present act. This power of recitation is not a function of an individual's *intention*, but is an effect of historically sedimented linguistic conventions. (Butler 1994, p. 137)

The same drifts of metaphor can be seen in Flax's formulation of the subject as an "effect of discourse" (1990) and in Foucault's association of knowledge and power. In displacing the subject, agency or causal efficacy is reassigned to discourse, language, or culture. Power is ascribed to knowledge, the subject is an "effect" of discourse, the force of the performative is derived from historically deposited linguistic conventions, and so on. Discourse is the social (Laclau 1980); the dynamic of discourse drives those it interpellates as subjects. Throughout, the original individuation of the subject remains though now as site in which discourse or the force of the performative have their effects. The social, conceived as the ongoing concerting of activities among people, is reduced to a solo performance, such that promising, marrying, or launching a ship (Austin 1962) are acts of individuals, a problem replicated in John Searle's (1969) theory of speech acts: "in speech act theory, a speech act is conceived as a closed totality where the intention corresponds to the act itself" (Salecl 1994, p. 30). The social remains unexplicated, even unnoticed.²⁰

Positing the individuated subject means that problems of knowledge must be solved with reference to states of individual consciousness—perception, cognition, experience—and the objects they perceive, know, experience, or otherwise apprehend. Poststructuralism/postmodernism blocks this route to knowledge by depriving the traditional unitary subject of authority, shifting determinations of consciousness, and hence of the object of knowledge, to discourse and language. As an epiphenomenon of language and discourse, the subject is incapable of giving access to what is extraneous to language or discourse that language can be made to express, to which it refers, or which is represented in them, and equally incapable of consensus since the worlds posited by the discourses they inhabit can coexist but not supersede one another. A new solipsism is created. It is no longer one which confounds reality with the perception of reality, a problem created by the Cartesian individuation of the subject. Now it is a solipsism of discourse, admirably expressed in the quotation earlier from Judith Butler (1994) which reinvents Plato's *Meno* in a new form, trapping us in the paradox that nothing can be known which is not already known.

Poststructuralism/postmodernism substitutes discourse for the knower: what is posited as beyond discourse is already discursively constituted. The multiplication of discourses multiplies subject positions. Different standpoints produce different knowledges (Stanley and Wise 1983, 1993). There is no social process in which subjects thinking differently might seek to evaluate discourses relative to one another; and there is nothing extraneous to the discourses constituting them as subjects about which they might argue and to which they can refer in seeking to persuade others of the veracity, accuracy, adequacy, of a representation.

THEORIZING SELF AND LANGUAGE AS SOCIAL

Poststructuralism/postmodernism boxes us into a theorizing of knowledge that precludes the significance of inquiry and denies even the possibility of discovery. An alternative is a theory which does not view "knowledge" as a solipsism of discourse, but preserves people's active presence and views knowledge as a definite form of social act in which an object world is constituted by participants as a world in common. Such a theory does not suspend the divergent perspectives and experience of actual individuals in the theoretical construction of a unitary subject. Rather it focuses in a dual fashion on how divergence is coordinated and how the forms of coordination (social relations) generate divergence.

Although Mead's²¹ conceptions of mind and self remain within the general framework of the individuated subject, they are exceptional in being fully social. For Mead, self is differentiated from objects and others in the development of the social act. But self is more than difference; it is an incorporation of the organization of the act and others' attitudes into the individual's psychic organization. It is the mechanism through which individuals are able to bring their consciousness and actions into a coordinated relation to ongoing processes of social action with others. Quite unlike the poststructuralist/postmodernist conception of the subject constituted in discourse, self is *active* in the ongoing concerting of activities with others. It is also dependent on symbolic communication since it is only in language that the individual is able to respond to his or her own actions as others might.

Of course, the self cannot be simply laid over the poststructuralist/postmodernist conception of the subject. Unlike the latter, Mead's conception of self is essentially dialogic. Far from treating the subject as an effect of discourse (or social act), the self is active dialogically in coordinating the individual's unfolding line of action within the social processes in which she/he is engaged.²² The self is individuated in the ongoing social act and is also the form of consciousness which brings a person's conduct into a coordinated relationship with those with whom she/he acts. Mead's theory embraces both notions of the social as arising from the the mindful activity of subjects creatively engaged with others in the social process, and an explication of the mechanisms of the self as at once differentiating and coordinating individual conduct.

Mead's theory of the self and of mind is also a theory of language and meaning. Self arises and operates only in the context of symbolic communication. His theory of language or symbolic communication is fully social in the sense that meaning is never already given, but is always an accomplishment of people active in the social act. He does not treat meaning as a property of a sign. For Mead the symbolic gesture and meaning arise in interaction among people in the social act; meaning isn't bound to signs that are transferred from one speaker to another, but is interactionally determined in a temporal sequence of an act (gesture) that calls out a response.²³ Language for Mead is an interindividual organization of consciousness; it is both within and "between" people; when one speaks and the other hears and responds, the one who speaks also hears and responds. Language picks out meanings, Mead said, and not just for the individual but for speakers and hearers participating together in a social act. Such a formulation of what Mead calls "symbolic communication" directs us towards an understanding of knowledge as grounded socially in an interindividual territory constituted by the language-mediated organization of the social act, rather than in a typical individual consciousness.

Mead, however, insists on the fluid, open-ended character of the ongoing concerting of social activity, and the distinctively human forms of that coordination. For him the social act is always an emergent; it is an ongoing coordination of activity among people in which what it has been emerges only as a moment in a social act. Meaning is generated in the social process and is not a property of language as an independent system of signs that "carry" their meanings around with them. Rather Mead sees language as *controlling* meaning in the local settings of its use; and at the same time, how it means is determined by the responses of both speaker and hearer within the social act.

Mead's theory of what he calls "symbolic communication" (stressing, in this phrase, the inter-individuality of language) also departs radically from conceptions of sense as determined by the intention of the speaker. The significant symbol *aligns* the consciousnesses/responses of speaker and hearer(s). The verbal symbol is heard as the same for both speaker and hearer; within the social act it elicits a coordinate organization of meanings for both. The significance of an utterance is not a discrete effect of the words that it assembles; rather it is determined retrospectively by what has gone before and gives determination to the emerging organization of the social act. Throughout, Mead's theory is striking in his insistence—sometimes his struggle—to conceive of self, object, symbol, meaning, as coming into being in the ongoing continuities of individual and social action. Symbolic com-

munication gives control over meanings arising in the social act and brings into the social process objects the constitution of which is rooted in the organism's responses or attitudes in its environment.

There remains, however, a deep problem in Mead's conception of symbolic communication. Mead's notion of meaning as arising in the social act insists that meaning must be in life and cannot "occur" other than in activities among people. This, however, does not account for how language already has a determinate capacity to mean before it is activated in actual situations of action, or indeed, how it is that symbolic communication can have that property so essential to Mead's theory, namely that speaker and hearer can hear and respond to speaker's words in the same way. He lacks a theorizing of language and discourse (as does this ontological tradition in general), or a means of making forays into social organization and relations beyond the matrix of the social act in which the self arises.²⁴ Despite Mead's treatment of symbolic communication and of the social grounding of the self-reflective self or mind, he lacks *a fully social conception of knowledge and language* which could integrate the discoveries and analytic innovations of poststructuralism/postmodernism.²⁵

Mead's conception of language and how language means is interestingly concordant with an apparently entirely independent tradition, identified with the names of Valentin N. Volosinov (1973) and Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1981, 1986) and originating in the Soviet Union at approximately the same period as Mead was writing in the United States. These theorists, like Mead, offer a social account of language and meaning conceived as embedded in and integral to people's actual activities in the local settings of their lives. Unlike Mead, however, they share contemporary poststructuralist conceptions of language and discourse as formative of how people can mean. Volosinov (1973), a member of Mikhail Bakhtin's circle, rejected theories of meaning in which signification is a property of determinations independent of local contexts of utterance. He is specifically critical of Saussure's structuralist theory of language. Like Mead, he views meaning as something like a field interpenetrating psyche and social. Language operates in this field neither fully in individuals' consciousnesses nor as a property of a system or structure distinct from them. Like Mead, Volosinov theorizes language as creating an interindividual territory. The sign is "interindividual" (Volosinov 1973, p. 12).

[A] *word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*. Each and every word expresses the "one" in relation to the "other." I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view (Volosinov 1973, p. 86; original emphases)

His formulation of how words mean as interindividual, within and beyond the psyche, is strikingly concordant with Mead's insistence that language—*symbolic* communication—calls out the same response in the speaker as it does in the hearer. Mead's theorizing of the self as arising in a reciprocity of perspectives in the ongoing social act could be viewed as supplementing Volosinov's unfinalized conception of the psyche as continuous with the social.

Mead's notion of meaning as arising in ongoing social acts presupposes (in his notion of language as a controller of meaning) that words carry a capacity to mean independently of particular local settings of action. But he lacks a theory of how words can bring an already determined meaning into a setting, for this must be presupposed if language is to be effective in controlling the field of meaning generated in the social act. Structuralist theories, on the other hand, provide for how words already mean before particular local settings of their uttering; they enter anyone's communicative use as already determined and trailing a debris of meaning beyond the intention to mean of the speaker/writer. Mikhail Bakhtin presents an alternative which preserves the moment of utterance as the ontological site of meaning. Bakhtin in particular envisages the ongoing multiple historical production of meaning as sedimenting "speech genres" which transmit their "taste" into each new moment of speaking or writing.

For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the "taste" of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word. (Bakhtin 1981, p. 293)

In contrast to poststructuralism/postmodernism's motiveless subject at the mercy of the winds of intertextuality, Bakhtin views every utterance as "containing" the speaker/writer's creative struggle to make a language that is pre-given and determines how she can mean, mean what she wants in the actual local settings in which she speaks or writes. For Bakhtin, the pre-giveness of language is always in movement as each new moment of people's creative struggle to get meaning done in actual settings of utterance is entered into the pre-giveness of language for those who come later.

As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 293-294)

Bakhtin's theory preserves a conception of the meaning of words as already sedimented historically by past activities and hence as determined prior to a given moment of speech or writing, but he also insists on meaning as produced and shaped in the local historical contexts of utterances. Concrete utterances are essentially dialogic, an active interplay between past determinations of meaning and their creative shaping to the speaker's or writer's current intentions (Bakhtin 1981, p. 272).

Thus both Mead and Bakhtin in different ways locate language in the settings and among the people who are speaking and hearing, reading and writing. *And nowhere else.* For Mead, the significant symbol is always an organization of responses in the social act;

Bakhtin contributes the determination of a sign as product of the speech genres in which it plays a part and the speaker/writer's struggle to make it express her intention in an actual utterance which is formative of the meaning the sign comes to bear forward. In returning on this basis to the problem of how signs may be taken as referring to "out there," I follow on from these theorists' location of meaning as an active moment in an ongoing social act involving more than one participant.

OBSERVING REFERRING

In Mead's view, the object constituted in the social act is not external to its naming. Mead's conception of objects is always as they arise in action. Objects come into being for the organism as it engages actively in and with its environment and are social as they are constituted in a social course of action as objects for participants.

. . .the social process, as involving communication, is in a sense responsible for the appearance of new objects in the field of experience of the individual organisms implicated in that process. . .objects are constituted in terms of meanings within the social process of experience and behavior through the mutual adjustment to one another of the responses or actions of the various individual organisms involved in that process. (Mead 1947, p. 77)

For Mead, the term for an object is an aspect of how its social character is produced.

Symbolization constitutes objects not constituted before, objects which would not exist except for the context of social relationships wherein symbolization occurs. Language does not simply symbolize a situation or object which is already there in advance; it makes possible the existence or the appearance of that situation or object, for it is part of the mechanism whereby that situation or object is created. The social process relates the responses of one individual to the gestures of another, as the meanings of the latter, and is thus responsible for the rise and existence of new objects in the social situation, objects dependent upon or constituted by these meanings.(Mead 1947, p. 78)

In Mead's view, language rather than simply expressing meaning, controls it. It is a mechanism capable of creating new objects because it selects meanings developing in a social process and brings them into the shared and social space that symbolic communication creates.

Here I draw on observations, my own or others, as "specimens"²⁶ in which we can find practices of referring to objects as moments in a social act. Rather than an individuated subject, subjects are plural. Practices of referring to an object are not an effect of discourse in the individuated subject and hence moot. Rather they are practices that organize among participants in a social act a shared universe of objects. "Referring" is a concerting of consciousnesses through symbolic communication that brings an object into the presence of participants in the emerging course of a social act.

The archeology of the first of my observations reveals a relatively primitive layer of my understanding of Mead's thought and certainly of language. At one time, I used to teach the "social significance of language" in courses on social psychology. To illustrate the structuring or organizing effect of language, as I then thought of it, I used to tell the story of one

of my children's first word. When Dave was about 18 months old, we lived in a second floor apartment in Berkeley, California. One morning, a bird was flying by the window, and I pointed to it and said "bird." He repeated the word, also pointing to the window where the bird had flown by. Shortly thereafter, we were at a doctor's office where there was a tank with tropical fish. Dave pointed to the fish and said "bird." And I said, "No, not bird. Fish." In class I used this anecdote to illustrate how language structures the way we can see/talk about the world. I suggested that there was a possible organization in Dave's analysis of a world in which "bird" collected not only those that flew through air, but any living object that oared through space and was seen through glass.

I think differently about that incident/instance now. Earlier I had been interested in how the name or concept organized or collected objects. I was teaching my son how to name objects properly. I was teaching him a word-meaning relation. The meaning would attach to the word. The word would pick out the object. What I now see is something rather different, namely that the word-meaning relation, the act of referring and teaching a child how to refer, was itself a social act. My naming the bird as I pointed it out to my son was more than teaching him the "correct" way to use a word. I was inducting him into the social act which constitutes an object as *being there* for participants. Dave and I were there together, looking together, looking at the same "thing." "Looking at the same thing" was more than a subjective orientation of consciousness; it was also the pointing that coordinated the direction of our looking.²⁷ Pointing brings the other's gaze into alignment with her/his own. There becomes an object. It is not yet an object for them before this alignment. We could "know" we were looking at the same thing as I named it and he repeated what was becoming for him—in *this social act*—a word. In learning to refer, he was learning how to constitute an object in a social act and for its participants, for us.

Referring to objects, as Dave was learning then, is a socially organizing practice that "implies" the presence of another and "implies" what Mead would call the shared "attitude" of looking that objectifies. Naming objects is more than naming what is already constituted. It sets up a social organization of relations among subjects and "what is there" that naming coordinates as the perception or recognition of an object in an ongoing social act. There is an alignment of the individual consciousnesses via the utterance. A virtual, if not an actual, other is always already implicated in utterances referring to objects; *a place is already prepared for the or another whether she is present or not*. Reference from language to objects always, in this view, carries the implication of a plurality of subjects.

We learn the whole bundle together as a socially organized practice. Not too long ago walking home, I saw a small child with her mother who was standing talking to another adult. The child was tugging her mother's skirt and saying "a cat, a cat, momma look, a cat" in a crescendo. She was pointing across the street to a black cat engaged in a leisurely toilet on the sunny sidewalk. Her mother eventually responded by looking briefly in the direction in which the child was pointing and saying, "Yes, Karen, a cat." The child stopped pulling and crying. Here (it seemed to me) was a child's practice of the social organization constituting an object *among* participants. The other's look and recognition of the object "seen" and named by a speaker is made accountable by the mother's "yes." "Cat" is thereby constituted or completed *as object* as the other accountably recognizes what the speaker sees.

The *social* “grammar” of naming and identifying or referring to objects called for a missing complement, the other’s “recognition” in her assent, her glance towards the object, and her repetition of “its” name. Once the mother “completed” the sequence by registering that she had seen the cat, Karen indicated the sequence was completed to Karen’s apparent satisfaction. Referring is a social act involving more than one in which “the appearance of the situation or object” (Mead 1947, p. 78) is accomplished in a sequence concluding in the other’s recognizing what becomes *for both of them* the object referred to.

The social organization of referring constitutes the object as independent of the experience or perception of any one individual. The independence is not theoretical; it is produced in the socially organized practices that coordinate different subjectivities with different perspectives and experience in relation to what becomes for them, in common, an object. This does not mean that there is no world that the organism, as Mead would say, encounters and finds “ordered” in a bodily mode prior to its social and human organization. Indeed the objects that thus come into presence for participants in a social act must somehow be built into this substrata, including the neuromuscular organization of the world as separate from self²⁸ (indeed the social organization of referring relies on physiological organization shared by the human species). The name-look-recognition sequence among people produces the object world *among us* and for each other. Practices of referring that fail, as Karen’s importuning of her mother to see the cat failed at first, are incomplete.

Mead’s conception of the social act is of an ongoing development of activity coordinated in its course among and by more than one, and symbolic communication constitutes a field of meaning *between* consciousnesses. When Helen Keller, blind and deaf from childhood, discovered the “symbolic” relation as her teacher ran water from the pump over her hand and then spelled the letters W A T E R on her palm, she was entering a social world that had not existed for her before. *Another is already implied in the naming of an object.* Keller knew water in whatever way she had known it before naming. The power of the word and of her discovery of the act of reference was to bring her into this triadic organization of the social act. It constituted an open-ended territory, a world that was enlarged by having now an existence beyond her own consciousness.²⁹ The presence of the other was *in and not separable from* the act of referring to the object by naming it. To repeat Volosinov (1973, p. 12): “signs can arise only on *interindividual territory*.” In a sense signs *create* or constitute an interindividual territory—the named and known-in-common object world is a specific organization of it. In practices of referring, others are always implicitly present; they carry and reproduce an attitude that objectifies “things” as “between” consciousnesses. Naming objects is a three-way relation; not just subject-object, but subject-subject-object. It is this three-way relationship that constitutes objects as social.

The symbolic order articulates socially an object world that is built as an everyday/everynight practice on how the human organism engages with the physical world it is born into. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) explores from the standpoint of the individuated consciousness the subject’s active perceptual organization of its world; Jean Piaget (1958) explored ethnographically how the “play” of infants with objects appearing and disappearing organizes for consciousness the world existing independently of consciousness that Piaget calls “reality” (the Freud/Lacan “*Fort-Da*”

anecdote is a fragmentary observation of an extended process³⁰). Practices installed at a neuromuscular level of organization are articulated *socially* through the symbolic order, establishing the physiological grounding among members of this species necessary for the very possibility of social objects, known in common. It is striking in Helen Keller's (1955) story how her teacher relies, in the absence of sight and hearing, on Helen's ability to *feel* the water splashing from the pump on to her hand to create the foundation of symbolic communication.

In Mead's account of the *social* object, that is, the object that arises or is accomplished as such in a social act, name and object are interdependent, though neither is a function of the other. There is a sequence here. Name picks out for participants in the act the object to be recognized in common; its status as real, that is, as object for others as well as for the speaker, is completed in responsive acts of recognition: the mother's "Yes, Karen, a cat." in the specimen above; or the mother's "No, not bird, Fish." in my own story. Even when the response corrects, the object has already been brought into the social act. Naming accomplishes it as presence in common, as an object *for* participants. Responses according agreement to the naming produce the object as known by participants as known. Karen sees the cat; Karen names cat to her mother; her mother sees the cat that Karen sees *and makes herself accountable to Karen for her seeing*. The object produced ostensibly as "interindividual" is produced in a *sequence* of interaction among people. It is completed in the interindividual mode in the other's "recognition" of what the speaker names and points to. The "interindividual" object is a dialogic production.

DISCOURSE AND REFERENCE

In the previous section, we looked at "referring" as everyday sequences of talking and looking among people. But not all such dialogues share co-presence. Where speaker and hearer are together and the object being identified is present, recognition can be made accountable, misrecognition correctable, in the course of the social act. Speaker can point to the object she names just as I did in introducing the word "bird" to my son or as Karen did, pointing out the cat to her mother. Corrections can be introduced, as I introduced a correction of name when Dave identified a fish as "bird." Recognition of the object that completes the social act of referring is made on the spot as it is in Karen's mother's "Yes, Karen, a cat." But the writer of a text does not share the situation of its readers and, however many precise instructions it includes, may not be able to anticipate comprehensively the contingencies of finding and recognition.³¹

Bakhtin inserts another kind of dialogue, one between local settings of speech and action and the meanings sedimented in speech genres or discourses which are carried forward from past into present. In contrast to poststructuralist/postmodernist's theorized capture of subject and meaning by discourse, Bakhtin theorizes local utterances as in dialogue with the speech genres. A speaker draws on a symbolic inventory determined prior to the setting and moment of her speaking. Meanings that words carry with them have already been shaped in previous settings of their use. Speech genres are configurations of meaning which have developed in the context and bear the imprint of the characteristic usages asso-

ciated with the activities of a group—a work organization, a professional practice, the experience of a generation and the like. The relation between any given occasion of speaking or writing and the terms and characteristic syntactic and stylistic practices of a speech genre, on which a speaker draws to speak and her hearer to understand, is dialogic. As words are drawn into an actual interchange, an utterance (speech or text) comes to meaning in an interplay between the speech genres which have given the words meaning before and the new life given them in the utterance. Thus rather than treating meaning or signification as simply attached to words and transferred in an unproblematic way to the hearer or reader, Bakhtin conceives meaning as a dialogic accomplishment specific to the utterance's setting or context (Bakhtin 1981).

Bakhtin (1986) makes a distinction between primary and secondary speech genres, the latter corresponding pretty closely to the notion of a discourse as the term has been used here. "Secondary speech genres" are

. . . novels, dramas, all kinds of scientific research, major genres of commentary and so forth [and] arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication . . . artistic, scientific, sociopolitical . . . (Bakhtin 1986, pp. 61-62)

Unlike the conceptions of discourse which stem from Foucault (see particularly Foucault 1981), Bakhtin's conception is one that emphasizes the socially active character of secondary speech genres. They are communication rather than rules, categories, statements, texts, and so on (Foucault 1981). This active and relational character of Bakhtin's conception is congenial to the sociology from the standpoint of women deployed in this paper. Discourse here is viewed as a socially organized activity among people. That the relations it creates among people are mediated by texts means that it is easy to forget that people are present and provide its dynamic. But Bakhtin reminds us that discourse's local accomplishment is an active dialogue between what people are trying to get said and get done at any given moment of speech or writing, and what has been given prior discursive shape.

In the context of discourse or secondary speech genres, the sequencing of the social act of referring originates elsewhere, entering dialogically into any local phase of the overall sequence. Hooking a local sequence of action into a discourse-driven dialogue means that readers/hearers must know how to "find" objects beyond-the-text that can be recognized as the object or objects to which the text refers. The ostensive act that joins name and "experience"—the woman seeing a bird, pointing to focus her son's gaze, and saying "bird," or Helen Keller's teacher pumping water over Helen's hand and tracing the letters W A T E R on her palm—isn't available. The reader in her practice of referring must bring to her reading of the text a procedure for indexing a universe of socially constituted objects.³²

Frederick Grinnell's (1987) account of teaching biology has direct parallels to the woman teaching her child to find the "bird." Here, however, what is being taught draws into the local accomplishment of referring the discourse of biology. The "cell concept" is of central importance in learning biology, but it is incomplete without its complement: being able to see a cell and recognize it as such. Grinnell writes that he has

. . . shown pictures [of cells and cell debris] to 1st-grade elementary school students, and they were unable to identify the cells. If, however, I showed them which of the

objects were cells and which were debris, the students subsequently were able to recognize other similar cells. More dramatically, the average medical student often is unable to distinguish between cells and cell nuclei when first shown light micrographs of tissue sections After studying histology the same students are able not only to make such distinctions, but also to discriminate among the different tissues and recognize the specific cell types of which they are composed. (Grinnell 1987, p. 10)

Far from the mere positing of the object within discourse that Butler theorizes, here is an *active* social process in which students learn to bring the concepts of discourse into the local work of finding and recognizing cells and cell types under the microscope.

Mead holds that a "symbol of communication" abstracts the "universal character" of an object (Mead 1938, p. 370) and that this "function" of language is systematically developed in science. Science confronts as a problem that of "successful reference to identical objects and characters through identical symbols mutually employed by different selves" (Mead 1938, p. 53).

The world that is there has taken up into itself all the order, definition, and necessity of earlier scientific advance. It is not there as hypothesis, in so far as the hypotheses have justified themselves in experience, nor is it there as analyzed relations, events, and particles. These characters have passed into things, and for the time being at any rate, they are there unanalyzed, with the same authority as that of the so-called sensible experience. (Mead 1938, p. 50)

Mead's formulation of the social always situates it in the experience³³ of the individual "organism" in action. The individual's experience within the social act is always more than the symbolic ordering of the act brings into focus; meanings arising in the social process are always more than those controlled by participants' utterances. From an attentional field evolving in an ongoing activity, symbols pick out and focus attention on the "universal character" of some aspect or feature present in that field which becomes *in this process* what we call generically an object.³⁴

The technologies of the laboratory standardize the production of events as the same for the perceptions of scientific workers in the multiple settings of their production. The microscope created a new encounter between human perception and an original, unnamed world of living beings. Naming them and learning the continuities of their differences has been the patient work of biological scientists. Maps and mapping recognize and formulate a terrain that is known as it cannot be from ground level but can only be found and recognized there. The trained discriminations that the scientist learns to make are indeed posited by the technical categories of the science, but making them is always a local practice of finding again the technically standardized category-object connection. Grinnell's students are being instructed to find *what others have found before them*. The categorization, criteria, methods of measurement and of identifying the continuities and differences of an object, etc. are the technical practices which produce for a scientific discourse not just what differentiates itself within an individuated consciousness, but an object *for the discourse* (Carr 1964).³⁵ Such objects are produced and reproduced *as* social in the social acts of science, whether in the work of inquiry or of teaching, as we see Grinnell's biology instructor at work. They coordinate individual consciousnesses as *discursive subjects* in locally accom-

plished social acts that complete the sequence of referring, finding and recognizing the “same” objects and recognizing them as the same.

Thus the specialized objects constituted in the technical practices of science are not external to the terms that name and locate them, nor are its objects simply expressions of its discourse as in Butler’s (1994, pp. 67-68) mechanical account of the dependence of the posited materiality on that positing as its constitutive condition. Producing an object for science is a technical work bound dialogically to others in relations mediated by the intertextuality of its discourse. Indeed the technology of science produces systematically objects and events which can be found and recognized as the same in the multiple settings of its discourse. The discovery of a pulsar analysed by Garfinkel, Lynch, and Livingstone (1981) shows at every moment the dialogic character of the work of the astronomers whose voices were recorded and whose notebooks were available for examination. Their practices of notetaking that record their observational procedures attends to what Foucault (1981) calls the rules of inclusion and exclusion of the discourse of astronomy. Their local practices are *in dialogue* (Mead 1938, pp. 52-53 uses the term “conversation”) with the discourse (Bakhtin’s secondary speech genre) and they are accountable within it. Their excitement as they begin to think that they have found something incorporates the significance their discovery will have for others.

Scientific techniques and technologies of observation, systematic note-taking, supplant but organize the same foundational sequence as Karen’s cries and pointing to the cat, and they provide for and are intended to enable, that others can track and find the object thus entered into the social act of science. The optically discovered pulsar of Garfinkel, Lynch, and Livingstone’s (1981) paper was not yet a discovery for the science or astronomy; it was not yet completed on that evening when the astronomers were recorded in “discovering” it. If it is to come to have “the same authority” as “sensible experience,” others, deploying these same techniques and technologies, must have “recognized” the object and affirmed it. Like Karen, the pulsar’s discoverers had to get others to “see” just what they “saw,” before anything had been discovered. The scientific paper reporting the “discovery” appended to Garfinkel, Lynch, and Livingstone’s analysis invites others to recognize of the object and affirm its existence as an object the scientific properties of which have passed into its existence for astronomy. Indeed the Garfinkel, Lynch, and Livingston paper leaves the achievement of the object at the “Mommy, there’s a cat” stage. A scientific discovery is not a one-time-through event. It is a sequential coordination of interchange among participants, in which the already dialogic ordering of the work of discovery gets hooked into the work of other scientists through the publication of “findings.” There is an implicit or explicit argument in which others following the directions supplied in the publication try to find again what the discoverers claim is there. And then there may—or may not—be the final moment in which the discovery is recognized and affirmed in further publications, journal reviews, or the like.³⁶

In imagining the forms of knowledge and their indexical operation in a dialogic relationship with the knowing subjects, I have used the metaphor of a map (Smith 1992) and the dialogic practices of reading a map in an actual situation of finding one’s way. I think of Ann, my son’s partner, and I driving to dinner with friends. It was dark. We had never been

to their house before, and it is in an area of Vancouver with which we aren't familiar. I am driving; Ann is navigating. She goes back and forth between the map and the not-always well-lit streets and street names. From the map and its conventions for describing the layout and its naming of the streets, she goes to the street names she can see and the configuration of the intersecting streets in the area we are driving through. She is able to give me advance notice of how a street intersects with another diagonally and then curves to connect with the street (overlooking the Burrard inlet) we want. And she's good at this, so I'm looking confidently for streets that "behave" as she tells me they will from her reading of the map. And they do. Under her guidance, we are successful in finding our friend's house. Finding our way involves going back and forth between the text of the map and the actual streets and "connecting" its conventionalized signs with the streets signs, the actual configuration of streets, and so on, that we're traveling. This dialogue relies on cartography's systematic and technical development of symbols that in actual local situations of reading instruct the reader to find in the actuality objects and relations that can be recognized and affirmed as intended by those symbols. This is an actual and social process. The map is inert. It doesn't happen until it is read. The competent reader knows how to locate her subjectivity in the universe of extension, a Cartesian universe, activating it as a "player" in the sequence of referring. Even if she is alone, in reading the text of the map she initiates a dialogue in which she plays both parts; she activates the instructions it carries *in potentia* and looks for what it tells her she can find. The map "tells" her what features of the world to find and recognize as expressions of the relations it draws, but she has to look outside the map to find them.

Conforming of the social and technical organization of the local to the conventions of the map, and of the map's picturing of a region to the features standing in recognizable correspondence to it, completes the circle of indexicality (Garfinkel 1967). Referring is not achieved wholly within language; it relies on a differentiation in the world beyond any given utterance; it is a moment in a social act in which the category used by the speaker provides something like a set of instructions for the hearer to locate and recognize an object that fits the category. The hearer may not be successful; she may get it wrong; or the instructions are not accurate and misdirect her. But a good map will tell the truth if we know how to read from it to the features it indexes—the complex of differences between pavement and sidewalk, the lined up houses, the street lights, the signs at the intersections—and how to carry on the dialogue it potentiates. Thus as a sequential social act Ann and I severally "find" the streets we are driving through as the streets identified on the map, and can find our way.

In Ann's reading of the map, she brings into play the product of a complex technical development of mapping, and representational conventions. As she "reads" the map, we both orient to an object world both see; features of the local environment become objects of attention to both; our relevances are the same. The local environment and its features are indexed by the map. What is there becomes a feature for us as it is "named" by the map's icons: "There should be a cross street pretty soon," Ann might have said, and I'd be looking out for it. But she might be on her own, and the dialogic of map and reader would be just as active, as she went from map to looking out of the window to find street intersections,

names, and the park shown in green that would tell her that she'd overshot the turn she needed to take.

Maps are built from locally recognizable differentiations to produce a standardized iconic representation. The relation between the objects symbolized on the map and the streets and parks are not in any sense *in* the map. The map reader must know how to find in the local particularities of the terrain the objects indexed by the map; they are not contained in cartographic discourse. The relation of referring is brought into being in an actual course of action in which a reader takes up the map as pointing beyond it to what she might be able to recognize as the object it names. It means picking out the objects referred to from a field of experience which is always more than what she recognizes as referenced by the map's icons. She may be alone, but in reading the map and finding her way, she brings discourse into active dialogue with the present in which she's looking for direction; she is participating in a social act. Knowledge is not the product of the solitary Cartesian consciousness, nor is it contained within a discursive field. It is indeed always indexical, to use Garfinkel's phrase, but in a stronger sense than he intended. Sense, meaning, truth—and falsehood—are always the local achievements of people whose coordinated and coordinating activities bring about the connectedness of statements about the world and the world they index during that time, in that place, and among those who participate in the social act, whether present to one another or not.

CONCLUSION

A scientific discourse sets up procedures standardizing the production and replication of local practices of knowing which are drawn dialogically into actual situations, just as we could see in the account of reading a map. Knowledge, and hence the possibility of telling the truth and of getting it wrong, is always among people in concerted sequences of action who know how to take up the instructions discourse provides and to find, recognize and affirm, or sometimes fail to find what discourse tells is there, as well as relying on just such dialogic sequences to settle disputes about what is. Knowledge, thus conceived, is always in time, always in action among people, and always potentiates a world known among us as known in common. This account of knowledge and telling the truth represents them not as functions of the individuated consciousness of post-Cartesian philosophy, but as dialogic sequences of action in which divergent consciousnesses are coordinated.³⁷

The problem of telling the truth that is postmodernism's challenge to sociology cannot be resolved by remaining within the assumptions of the individuated consciousness that postmodernism preserves while rejecting the unitary subject of modernity. Here I have argued that a fully social, dialogic account of knowledge and truth holds out for systematic inquiry the possibility of telling the truth about what it finds. I have centered attention on the problem of referring and representing since these are central problems presented by poststructuralism/postmodernism to sociology, putting forward as an alternative an account which presupposes more than one subject. Drawing on the work of Mead (1938, 1947) and Bakhtin (1981, 1986) (and to a lesser extent of Volosinov 1973), I have presented an account of reference as an interactional sequence relating word and object in a

practical process of telling, finding, and affirming recognition. This is a social act implicating more than one consciousness who could perceive things differently and whose perceptions are coordinated in it. Knowledge joins consciousnesses whose perspectives are necessarily divergent, giving us what can be *known as known* in common. Perspectives are subdued to the virtual of what we can treat as there for you as it is for me—the water flowing over Helen Keller's hand becomes the water which she can "know" as what is known both to her and her teacher. Experience is fragmented and diverse, arising out of different biographies and different sites and projects in a given setting; the dialogic of knowing creates the virtual space of a world recognized as known in common. Divergent perspectives are coordinated in the social act of referring and, more generally, of knowledge.

In this view, telling the truth is itself a social act in more than the obvious sense that "telling" gives us. Here it is truth itself, knowledge itself, which is resolved from its conceptual stasis into sequences of concerted action which methodically accomplish for participants what they can know as known in common. Truth and knowledge are grounded in the foundational moments in which the social comes into being through language and through the sensory ground which human organisms share. Through these *together*, individual experience becomes hooked up to a world known in common and is radically and forever transmuted. Referring to an object is a social act producing for each present what is first named, or pointed to, or referred to in some other way, as what is to be dialogically achieved in another's "recognition." Referring is a sequential and active dialogue among speakers and hearers, or text and readers, implicating and relying on the humanly shared senses of participants, their bodily being and activities of looking, touching, smelling, hearing, etc. to discover, to actively pick out, what becomes for them the object referred to in the course of dialogue. We have seen "referring" as essentially dialogic, both in the local sequences of the social act in which Karen's mother finds and recognizes the cat that Karen is telling her to see, and in relation to the dialogue between discourse and local actualities in which the map reader finds her way. The text of a map never stands alone; it is always waiting for its connection with the local actualities it intends; the sense that it can make is incomplete without that reference yet that reference is not wholly contained within it.

The sociology projected here aims at just such a dialogic relation to the actualities of people's lives. As much as does postmodernism, it rejects the grand imaginary maps of the Marxisms of the 1960s and 1970s (distinguish them from Marx himself!) as well as of the sociologies which give primacy to theory and whose phenomenal universe is constituted by abstractions. Instead it aims at knowing the social as people actually bring it into being. Its objects would not be meaning but the actual ongoing ways in which people's activities are coordinated, particularly those forms of social organization and relations that connect up multiple and various sites of experience since these are what are ordinarily inaccessible to people. And unlike maps of lands, seas, and seacoasts, these have to be maps of relations in motion, the dynamic of which generates changes in how we are related, what we experience, and what we do and can do.

Nonetheless, the ability of such a sociology to tell the truth would be in how it could be entered dialogically, just as a map is, into everyday activities of finding and recognizing where we are in relation to others and how what we are doing and what is happening is

hooked into such relations. There is no massive pre-empting of multiple and divergent perspectives by a single overarching view which claims an hegemony of consciousness. Such a sociology is just as resistant to the pre-empting of many divergent perspectives by a single objectified stance as is postmodernism, but does not come to rest there. The metaphor of a map directs us to a form of knowledge of the social that shows relations between various and differentiated local sites of experience without subsuming or displacing them. Such a sociology develops from inquiry and not from theorizing; it aims at discoveries enabling us to locate ourselves in the complex relations with others arising from and determining our lives; its capacity to tell the truth is never contained in the text but arises in the map-reader's dialogic of finding and recognizing in the world what the text, itself a product of such inquiry, tells her she might look for.

NOTES

1. I am indebted to the reviewers of this paper for their critique. Their thoroughness and thought were valuable to me in rewriting. It has not been practicable for me to respond to those of their suggestions that were directed towards enhancing its references to symbolic interactionism. Though deeply influenced by the work of George Herbert Mead, originally introduced to me in Tamotsu Shibutani's brilliant course at the University of California at Berkeley in the late 1950s, my history in sociology has not been in symbolic interaction, and I cannot redirect it at this point. I have, however, reworked the paper to develop its dependence on Mead more fully, and I hope this will compensate for the deficits they found. I am also very appreciative of the critical thought and eye of my friend and colleague Liza McCoy.
2. Discourse is an ambiguous term, coming into use in the 1960s in linguistics as that discipline redefined its phenomenal universe from the single sentence to stretches of talk or writing (Schiffrin 1994, p. 23). As Diane Macdonnell (1986) defines discourse it resembles Bakhtin's "speech genres" and in fact she refers to Volosinov (1973) in introducing the concept of discourse. "Discourse is social," (p. 2) she writes, "... The kind of speech proper to the shop-floor of a factory conflicts with that of the boardroom. Different social classes use the same words in different senses and disagree in their interpretation of events and situations" (p. 3). There is a distinction to be made, at least for the sociologist, between speech genres which are characteristic of definite forms of work organization—the shopfloor or the boardroom—and those of the social relations mediated by texts that I've called "the relations of ruling." Bakhtin (1986) deploys the notion of primary and secondary speech genres to make this distinction—secondary speech genres corresponding closely to the latter. Foucault, particularly in his "The Order of Discourse" (1981), uses the term in a rather more specialized sense, as those extended text-mediated conversations which constitute "a conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced" (Young 1981, p. 48). The last has been most influential in raising issues of knowledge and truth as effects exclusively within the rules and practices of inclusion and exclusion that determine truth for a given historical period (Foucault 1981, p. 60).
3. George Herbert Mead's work (1938, 1947, 1992) belongs to a family of ontologies of the social which understand the social as an ongoing creation of actual people and hence as actually happening in real time and in real settings. He was indeed influential on at least some of the members of this family, notably, of course, Herbert Blumer (1969) whose formulation of "the Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism" has been of such significance to symbolic interactionism; somewhat more distant are Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) whose theory of the social construction of reality focuses on the dynamic of interaction among people in institutional creation and Harold Garfinkel whose (1967, 1972) radical and

brilliant innovations in this general ontological family propose that sociology's notions of order, facticity, sense, etc. be operationalized as people's ongoing accomplishments in the local settings of which they are members. These ontologies have bypassed or rejected theoretical realizations of the social as system or structure and have contrived to retain it as a lived actuality among people.

Mead's ontology is, in my view, congenial to Marx and Engels' (1976) premises for a new materialism to be based not on concepts but on actual individuals and their activities under definite material conditions. Marx's treatment of the "systemic" properties of economic relations, at least as formulated in *The German Ideology*, is grounded in an ontology which problematizes how individuals who always start from themselves, themselves produce the powers that stand over against them and overpower their lives. Economic relations, for Marx, are indeed relations among people that appear as if they were relations between things—money and commodities—and have a dynamic beyond people's intentions and control.

My own development of these sociological ontologies diverges in two respects: one is in insisting on beginning in the local actualities of people's lives and relying on their experience as *point d'appui*; and the second is in shifting focus from actions as "attached" to individuals to the concerting or relating *between* people's activities—closer in this respect to some varieties of ethnomethodology, particularly those, such as Charles Goodwin's (1981), that displace the individuated subject as centre.

4. I recognize that this term is imprecise. I use it to identify a rather general current of thinking that has developed in North America and is based upon thinking originating in France and associated with the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, and others. These theorists may have little in common other than their problematizing of traditional epistemologies, particularly those foundational to the Marxisms of post-Second-World-War France, but in North America they have come to be foundational to an influential intellectual community in the humanities and social sciences. I note that Judith Butler and Joan Scott (1992) use the term in a similar way in their "Introduction" to their edited volume *Feminists Theorize the Political*.
5. Ann Game, introducing her "deconstructive sociology," says she's "been greeted with a certain puzzlement on the part of people in the humanities: 'why bother with sociology?'" (Game 1991, p. ix).
6. This quotes Derrida (1970):

There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to attack metaphysics. We have no language—no syntax and no lexicon—which is alien to this history; we cannot utter a single destructive proposition which has not already slipped into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulation of precisely what it seeks to contest. (Derrida 1970, p. 250)
7. Barthes writes:

The difference is as follows: the work is concrete occupying a portion of book space (in a library, for example); the text, on the other hand, is a methodological field. (Barthes 1979, p. 74)
8. Flax's formulation traces Lyotard's of 1988. See Flax 1992, pp. 60-62 in particular.
9. Of course, their proposal looks suspiciously like a metanarrative of another kind, a retroactive theoretical validation of what has all along been fundamental to the women's movement, namely difference, conflict, alliance, etc. After all, it sets up a universalized subject as the metanarrative or philosophical legislator of multiple subject positions, none of which can lay claim to the position it has itself commanded. Perhaps most problematic, in multiplying theory it calls into question theory itself. Who needs theory if anything goes? And there are no decision-rules?
10. Richard Rorty goes further:

When the notion of knowledge as representation goes, then the notion of inquiry as split into discrete sectors with discrete subject matters goes. The lines between novels, newspaper articles, and sociological research gets blurred. (Rorty 1994, p. 58)

11. In this respect, there is continuity between poststructuralism and Frege's (Dummett 1981) conception of the objectivity of meaning, overriding individual subjectivities. Christopher Norris (1991, p. 106) suggests that poststructuralism is an updating of Frege's theorizing of language.
12. Though Jeffrey Alexander (1995) has not retreated from modernity, indeed is fighting a vigorous rearguard action, he has given a new centrality to interpretation in his recent work:

Perhaps it is wise to acknowledge that it is a renewed sense of involvement in the project of universalism, rather than some lipid sense of its concrete forms, that marks the character of the new age in which we live. Beneath this new layer of the social top soil, moreover, lie the tangled roots and richly marbled subsoil of earlier intellectual generations, whose ideologies and theories have not ceased to be alive. The struggles between these interlocutors can be intimidating and confusing, not only because of the intrinsic difficulty of their message, but because each presents itself not as form but as essence, not as the sense of the world. Each of these worlds does make sense, but only in a historically bounded way. Recently, a new social world has come into being. We must try to make sense of it. For the task of intellectuals is not only to explain the world; they must interpret it as well. (Alexander 1995, p. 47)

13. It is pervasive in contemporary theorizing of language and discourse. And not only in poststructuralism/postmodernism. John Searle's (1969) "speech act" theory is deeply constrained by the assumption of the individuated subject.
14. A parallel is the use of "woman" as in Slavoj Žižek's (1994) *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*.
15. Indeed reading Derrida's critique of Husserl against Mead's theory of mind, suggests to me that Derrida's grand project is a struggle to recognize, while not admitting, the social from within the epistemological boundaries of the traditional philosophic conception of the individuated subject.
16. As a constitutional theory for cultural theorizing it is powerful, allocating both conscious and unconscious regions to its determinations; as a foundation for a politics of change, as feminists have proposed (Mitchell and Rose 1982), it follows the course Marx so long ago disdained as a revolution in language only; as an account of the development of children as social beings, it is pitiful.
17. Salecl (1994), as well as Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (1982), claims that Lacan's theorizing posits an empty genderless subject who becomes committed to gender in his or her procession through the Lacanian version of the Oedipal complex. This view neglects how gender has already entered into the process as the dumb and invisible mother and the father arrogating language and law.
18. See also Colette Soler's account in her essay, "The Subject and the Other (I)" (Soler 1995).
19. Stripped of the rhetoric of power and effectivity, Butler's account has much in common with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) in *The Social Construction of Reality*.
20. The invisibility of the social to Searle's philosophy reaches an apotheosis of systematized ignorance in his 1995 book *The Construction of Social Reality*.
21. In many ways, as those of us who are old enough to remember among other graduate students asking the question, "but are we really only a bunch of roles," the contemporary theorizing of the subject as a position in discourse has an odd familiarity. It has been odd too to read in Lacan and sometimes in Derrida awkward and extraordinarily inert accounts of self and other when some 50 years earlier Mead was writing a subtle and dialectical account of self and of mind as self-reflection which constructs the individuated subject inherited from Descartes's *cogito* as arising in and inseparable from an ongoing social process.

22. Michel Foucault's conception of self-formation has some parallels with Mead's conception of the self, involving attention to or awareness of the subject's experiencing in everyday activities—"care of the self is the care of activity," he says (Foucault 1988, p. 25). But self-formation is conceived as a kind of moral discipline, involving bringing principles to bear on the individual's activities. Mead's conception of self, however, is of a capacity to participate in social organization which is *prior* to the level of organization Foucault explicates.
23. Mead was committed to the development of "a behavioristic account of the self, mind, and reflective intelligence" (Mead 1982, p. 106). His use of the term "response" had not yet been appropriated by the stimulus-response theory he opposed (1982, pp. 112-115), a use which contaminates our contemporary reading of Mead. Now we might want to introduce the concept of "interpretation" into the act-response sequence to reclaim Mead's insistence on the active part an organism plays in the constitution of the object to which it "responds"; "the form creates objects towards which it responds and within which it acts: it creates its environment" (Mead 1982, p. 115).
24. Though Mead's conception of the self is of a dialectic arising with and coordinating the individual's consciousness within the social act, his version of the subject or self is fully within the tradition of the unitary subject of the Enlightenment. For Mead, science, scientific rationality, and discovery are extrapolations of the self-reflective self—in a sense, Mead's theory of mind and self can be seen as a social account of the Cartesian subject. For example, the following passage from his essay on "The Nature of Scientific Knowledge" which is chapter III in *The Philosophy of the Act* (1938):

... the world that is there includes and surrounds the problem [that leads to discovery] in the sense that the problem is also there within the field of conduct When these problems pass into the field of reflection, they are so formulated that they would occur in any experience, that is, they take on a universal form. Such a formulation is essential to the reflective process of their solution. Their actual occurrence, however, in the world that is there awaits the advent of the conflict of responses in the experience of some individual; and the solution as well, inasmuch as it departs from the common or universal habits of the community, must be an individual achievement before it can become the attitude of all and be thus universalized.

Mead's "science" lacks a sense, let alone an analysis, of its institutional and hence "power" dimensions. By contrast, Michel Foucault's work has provided us with an understanding of science as discourse, which makes Mead's idealization of science as a community of reasoning individuals look seriously inadequate. At the same time, Mead's struggle to find the concerting of the individual consciousness and of individual experience with science as a conversation directs us towards dimensions of scientific discourse which Foucault's theory obliterates. His dialectic between experience as arising in an individual's consciousness and the universalizing of (what presumably becomes at this juncture) "the problem" in a (scientific) community, could contribute usefully to the feminist debates on the status of experience in knowledge.

25. Charles Morris's (1955) semiotics, which drew in part on Mead's conception of symbolic communication, does not advance a solution in this respect since in his theory it is the individual subject whose concerns and interests drive discourse, and language is expressive of his intentions. Typical is Morris's (1955) discussion of "religious discourse":

The adequacy of religious discourse itself depends upon whether or not it appeals to given individuals in a given cultural milieu as a way in which their lives can be satisfactorily focused and directed. When this is not the case, new prophets appear to proclaim a mode of life which they have found significant, and if other individuals find the new way to be significant for themselves, a new religion and religious literature arises which will seek its esthetic embodiment, its appropriate techniques, and its critical defense. The complicated

human self has need of some focal attitude to give it orientation, and the significance of religion lies in its attempt to meet this need. (Morris 1995, p. 148)

26. When I first discovered the Oxford philosophers, notably Gilbert Ryle and J.L. Austin, and tracked back to their inspiration in Ludwig Wittgenstein, I was immensely attracted to the notion of exploring philosophical issues by, as Wittgenstein (1953, p. 48) put it, "bring[ing] words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use." I thought their analyses of "specimens" of people's everyday language practices were a model for sociology. In working on the problem of how to conceive of language in the concerting of people's activities, that is, as social, I have followed their example in making collections of specimens—I call it "botanizing" in another context (Smith 1990, pp. 165-167).
27. I notice now that small children, before they can name, learn to point and that pointing brings the other's look to orient in the direction of pointing.
28. See Jean Piaget's (1958) brilliant ethnography, *The Child's Construction of Reality*.
29. This may be another version of the loss of reality that, Lacan argues, is entailed by entry to the symbolic order, although in this view, "reality" comes into being only in the social act constitutive of the world in common among diverse consciousnesses.
30. An old husband's tale?
31. See Lucy Suchman's (1987) *Plans and Situated Actions* for an examination of the problems of producing generalized instructions to direct actions in multiple and particular local settings.
32. Some of these may, of course, have arisen as objects in social acts exclusively in and of discourse.
33. Mead's conception of experience and its relation to knowledge is not of an individual subject's unmediated access to a reality independent of the social. That is, the version of experience that has been criticized by feminists (see Chandra Talpade Mohanty 1995). From the latter viewpoint, recognizing that discourse mediates experience invalidates claims that women's experience provides a privileged source or ground of knowledge (it is seldom clear who actually makes such claims). In contrast to a model of experience assuming the individuated subject as the ground of knowledge, Mead understands experience as conjoining current consciousness with organization laid down in the course of an individual's biography. Hence experience is socially mediated. Since in Mead's view, knowledge is social, experience, as essentially of the individual, can only be a moment in the social act in which knowledge comes about, though Mead seems to have held that scientific discoveries arise at the intersection between individual experience and science as a community in conversation (see quote in footnote 24 above).
34. Some of Mead's later writing suggests that the "objectness" (identity, persistence, continuity, etc.) of an object is itself an accomplishment of an ongoing course of action. See, for example, his account of how we can "speak of the fruit as existing throughout the whole process of preparing it for the table" (Mead 1938, p. 143). It would seem that Mead's account of the object and of the possibility of reference and representation bypasses altogether Jacques Derrida's critique (see in particular Derrida's (1973) *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* and Rodolphe Gasché's (1986) *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*).
35. This account is, of course, in direct disagreement with those who take up science as wholly within language or discourse as does Richard Rorty (1994) who argues that the difference between Galileo and Aristotle was not Galileo's telescope or his fascination with the *observed* movement of objects, but his "terminology."

[S]cientific breakthroughs are not so much a matter of deciding which of various alternative hypotheses are true, but of finding the right jargon in which to frame hypotheses in the first place. (Rorty 1994, p. 48)
36. See Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar's (1986) *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* for an ethnography of this sequence.

37. Postmodernism focuses its critique on theories of and claims to knowledge founded in the experience or perception of the individuated subject. Hence inserting language and discourse into the subject-object relation undoes the very possibility of telling the truth. But if knowledge is a social act, then an epistemology might address issues of truth in terms of whether, following instructions, someone can find and recognize what is asserted (of an optically discovered pulsar, for example) and on the different ways in which disagreements about what is the case can be settled.

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